

Parent Empowerment in Education

Measuring What Matters

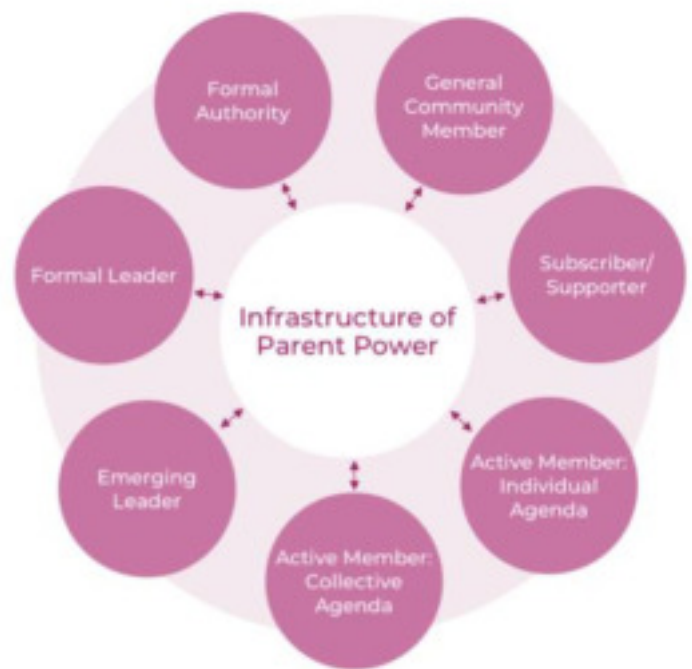
ROLES PARENTS CAN PLAY IN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment strategies only succeed if parents are informed and organized so that they can exercise their innate power. These strategies (and the underlying actions that they employ) require parents to play a wide range of roles.

Further, as we will discuss in the **measurement section**, the ability to quantify the number of individuals in each role is a crucial way for organizations to measure their **infrastructure of parent power**. This allows organizations to understand where they are collectively strong and where they need to invest in infrastructure building (and maintenance) to achieve their impact agenda.

We have identified the **following seven roles parents can play in building an infrastructure of power to execute on parent empowerment strategies**:

- **General Community Member.** An individual who is consuming value from your organization (*i.e., going to your website or social media*) or receiving mass outreach from you (*i.e., mass mailing, mass emailing, advertising*), but for whom you don't have unique identifying information.
- **Subscriber/Supporter.** An individual who is known to your organization with unique identifying information (which also allows you to segment by attributes). A subscriber/supporter is a consumer of your organization's resources (in ways that often can be measured) but is not actively engaged at a personal level in taking action in a way you can track.
- **Active Member: Individual Agenda.** A parent who is actively involved in exercising their power through engagement with your organization, with the focus being on meeting the needs of their children (vs. a larger collective agenda).
- **Active Member: Collective Agenda.** A parent actively involved in exercising their power through engagement with an organization on a collective agenda at the school, district, city, or state level. This could include participating in one or more actions (any actions or specific types), both online and in the real world.
- **Emerging Leader.** A parent beginning to develop a role leading others in collective action.



- **Formal Leader.** A parent who sees themselves and is seen by others as a leader, can plan and execute collective action, and is followed by members of their community.
 - **Formal Authority.** A parent who holds a formal role in the system – elected, appointed or employed – to have influence on decisions impacting their community.
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Important points to consider

- Each of these roles is different, and each is a role that creates distinct value.
- An individual's progression across these roles need not be linear – they can begin their relationship with your organization in any role. That said, most organizations tend to plan for an initial progression that moves clock-wise through these roles.
- An individual may move from one role to another (in any direction) over time depending on their life circumstance and their interest/alignment with an organization's impact agenda.
- **Not every organization's strategy requires parents deploying their power in all of these roles!** Organizations should customize which roles they prioritize based on a range of factors: their local context; their impact agenda; the strategies they are employing to achieve that agenda; the actions within each strategy; mapping who has what authority in their community and how to exercise power to influence that authority in order to achieve their impact agenda; and/or the ecosystem of partners and other players who share this impact agenda.

For example, organizations focused on supporting parents as partners or in exercising the power of their choice are going to focus most on Subscribers/Supporters and Active Members acting on their individual agendas.

Organizations focused on strategies around influencing the system through exercising the power of their collective voice (issue campaigns) or exercising the power of their votes (electoral campaigns) will focus heavily on developing an infrastructure of parents as Active Members working on a collective agenda and in Emerging Leader and Formal Leader roles (though General Community Member and Subscriber/Supporter remain important measures of broad reach and engagement with the community, and a pipeline to support parents moving into more involved roles).

Concluding thoughts

It is also worth noting that different organizations will use their own variations of this framework. Some may have fewer categories or more categories depending on what is applicable to their work. Some visually depict this as a continuum, while others lay this out as a ladder or pyramid.

While having a common language in the sector would of course be helpful, it is also not necessary. **Ultimately what is most important is for organizations to create internal alignment about their framework for an infrastructure of parent power.**